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"Saying it like it is!"

Another long and stressful week - sigh! So, it's another week with little commentary. I will mention however, that this week we've included some commentary from IGN that oertains to the history of Atari. Whatever you choose to believe regarding Atari's successes and failures, and ultimate demise, IGN does a pretty good job at summarizing the saga of Atari. I hope that you enjoy it, as I did.

Until next time...

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Anti-Violent Gaming Yee Indicted for Corruption!

IGN Presents: the History of Atari!

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Anti-Violent Gaming Politician Leland Yee Indicted for Corruption

Democratic California State Senator Leland Yee notorious in the gaming industry for his stances on gaming and the gaming industry has been indicted for public corruption, according to The San Jose Mercury News.

According to the Mercury News, The FBI was seen at Yee s Sacramento office, where they reportedly arrived at 7 a.m. KCRA confirms that Yee was taken into San Francisco s Federal Building wearing handcuffs after he was detained...

It is still unclear what the FBI specifically alleges Senator Yee did. The Mercury News report states that the Targets of the raid are expected to appear in federal court in San Francisco this afternoon, where things should be further clarified. KCRA claims that he will be charged for both bribery and corruption.

California State Senator Leland Yee.

Leland Yee's crusade against the gaming industry and violent video games specifically goes back to 2005, during the Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas Hot Coffee fiasco. He's best-known for the violent video game law passed that year, signed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, which opposed the sale or rental of violent games to minors. The law went to the Supreme Court in 2010 - a law supported by California's governor and 11 other states - and was ultimately struck-down by the Republican-leading court, 7-2.

Yee reemerged in 2013 in the wake of the school shooting at Newtown, Connecticut, stating:

Gamers have got to just quiet down. Gamers have no credibility in this argument. This is all about their lust for violence and the industry's lust for money. This is a billion-dollar industry. This is about their self-interest.

Yee's chief-of-staff later talked to IGN, noting that it wasn't the most artful thing he ever said, and that it was not directed at individual gamers. Ironically, Yee represents San Francisco, California's bastion of gaming and technology.

We reached out to Senator Yee's offices in Sacramento, San Francisco, and San Mateo. No one answered the phone at any of the three locations.

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->A-ONE Gaming Online      -          Online Users Growl & Purr!
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IGN Presents: the History of Atari - Video game pioneers.

(Part 1 of 4)

To those born into the console era, whose formative gaming education came from Nintendo, Sega, or PlayStation, Atari feels like an amorphous presence in the world of videogames: a once-important name that has been diluted by countless mergers, acquisitions and bankruptcies. A titan of the arcade era whose relevance had dwindled almost to nothingness by the turn of the millenium.

Many younger gamers have little idea of the extent to which this one company laid the foundation of the modern video game industry, beyond recognizing the name, and perhaps knowing that the Atari 2600 was an early home console. But the truth is that the modern video game industry owes almost everything to Atari and its two founders.

Atari was a defining force in both arcades and the home computers throughout the 1970s and 80s (it wasn't until 1993 that it finally shut down its computer manufacturing arm). In one form or another, it brought us everything from Pong to Tempest, Centipede to the famously dreadful E.T. The Video Game. But Atari's games are only part of the story. Atari's founders invented the video game arcade cabinet, helping to create the arcade culture that gave birth to modern video games. Without Atari, the history of games would have been completely different. The story of its rise and its many, varied deaths is a fascinating one that spans the entirety of modern gaming's history, from the early 70s to its latest bankruptcy in January 2013.

The variety of corporate metamorphoses that Atari has undergone over the years is such that its history becomes difficult to untangle after a certain point, but Atari's story starts as world-changing things very often do: with one person and a great idea. Atari's two founders, Nolan Bushnell and Ted Dabney, met in 1969, where they were both working for a company called Ampex in Redwood City, California. Years earlier, as an electrical engineering student in Utah, Bushnell had developed a fascination with one of the very first video games, Spacewar, developed on an improbably giant computer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1962 by Professor Steve Russell and two of his students. He'd sneak into the college's computing lab at night with a fraternity brother to play it.

Bushnell's college was important. Computer graphics were invented at the University of Utah in the 1960s by a man named Ivan Sutherland, one of computer science's pioneers. The University had, at the time, state of the art computer equipment. This made Bushnell one of a relatively very small number of people who could play the earliest video games, including Spacewar, on campus computers.

While attending school, Bushnell also worked in an amusement arcade called Lagoon Amusement Park during the holidays, and it occurred to him that the electronic game could work as a coin-operated machine. Arcades at that time were halls of pinball cabinets and other coin-operated entertainments, like slot machines and ball-throwing gambits and other trivial games of skill and chance. What Bushnell essentially envisioned, though, was the 1980s arcade, packed with glowing coin-op game cabinets and spellbound teens - places where an entire generation would fall in love with video games. These places would not have happened without him, and his company, Atari, would become one of the biggest names in this future world.

In post-war America pinball was demonised in the same way that video games frequently have been in the decades since. In the 1940s and 50s, the most rebellious, coolest thing you could do as a young person in many parts of America was to hang out near a pinball machine. Parents and other worried adults banded together to protest the machines, fearing that their children were being corrupted by their bright, noisy influence, transformed into time-wasting entertainment junkies and being led into gambling. Pinball machines were actually made illegal in some parts of the country - perhaps most famously, New York mayor Fiorello LaGuardia ordered the seizure of thousands of machines in January 1942 and smashed them up for materials to help with the war effort. Pinball remained technically illegal in New York until 1976. Imagine, against this backdrop of moral panic, how people reacted to the introduction of electronic video games, and to the transformation that the arcade would undergo.

But in the early 1960s, computers still required a small room to house them. It wasn't until the tail-end of the decade that Bushnell, along with Ted Dabney, would develop the first ever coin-operated arcade machine for a company called Nutting Associates. It was called Computer Space. The game released in 1971, and although it fell short of the manufacturer's expectations and was considered something of a failure by Nutting (it was just too complicated to catch on in a big way outside of college campuses, Nolan later posited), it still sold 1500 units and made Bushnell and Dabney enough money to strike out on their own and continue making coin-operated electronic games.

Their company - originally called Syzygy Co. - was founded in 1971. Upon discovering that the name was already in use in California, the duo changed it to Atari, Inc in 1972. The word ataru literally means to hit a target in Japanese and is associated with good fortune. The name came from the ancient Chinese board game Go, of which Bushnell was a fan. He essentially chose company's name from amongst its strange jargon. In that context, Atari means something closer to I'm about to win - like check in chess. Other name candidates, reportedly, were Sente and Hane.

Dabney invented the early technology that allowed dots to move on a screen without the assistance of an extremely expensive computer, and thereby essentially invented modern video games. It was called the Spot Motion Circuit, and it allowed a dot to move up, down, left and right on a screen. It was a different world from the supercomputers that Spacewar was running on, as it allowed dedicated cabinets to be manufactured at a reasonable cost with built-in boards. It was essentially the invention of the video game arcade cabinet.

The mediocre-performing Computer Space was the first ever commercially-sold video game, but it was the newly-founded Atari's first game that would set the stage for the rapid evolution and soaring popularity of the arcade. In 1972, Bushnell attended a demonstration of the first-ever home video game console, the Magnavox Odyssey - a brown-and-beige plastic box released in August 1972 that played a small variety of silent games, including Table Tennis, a competitive tennis game that probably looks pretty familiar to you. The Magnavox sold around 330,000 across the North America and Europe, where it was released in 1973.

Magnavox's tennis game was far from the first, of course. On the University of Utah campus computers, Bushnell likely played a few of them; a version of tennis called Tennis for Two was created as far back as 1958.

But none would break out like Atari's Pong, released in 1972. It wasn't Bushnell himself who created the program for Atari, but a new hire by the name of Al Alcorn, who had worked at Apex alongside Atari's founders as a junior engineer and had never so much as seen a video game until Bushnell showed him Computer Space. Pong was the first game program he ever created. Not bad, as far as starts go.

Nobody actually expected Pong to go anywhere; Al Alcorn, famously, was assigned it as a project to test his abilities, and it was never intended to be a commercial product. But what Al made, after months of work making it more efficient, turned out to be a lot of fun. The differences between Pong and the Magnavox tennis games might not seem that obvious now, but they were hugely significant then, especially within the technical confines of the time. Pong's ball sped up the longer the game went on,

and pinged off the paddles at different angles depending on where it was hit. The gaps at the top of the screen, actually the result of a quirk in the technology rather than intention, ensured that no game of Pong could go on forever, that there was always that tiny space for the ball to slip past. Plus, it had sound. That might not sound like much, but it turned digital tennis from absurdly dull to incredibly addictive.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Obama Wants To End The NSA s Bulk Phone Collection

President Obama plans to ask Congress to end the bulk collection and storage of phone records by the National Security Agency but allow the government to access that metadata when needed, a senior administration official said on Monday.

If Congress approves, the Obama administration would stop collecting the information, which lists millions of phone calls made in the United States. The practice triggered a national debate over privacy rights when the extent of the surveillance program was exposed last year by former NSA contractor Edward Snowden.

Instead, the government would have to get permission from the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court to review data about the time and duration of telephone calls that it believes may be connected to terror attacks, according to The New York Times, which first reported the plan.

Obama, who on Monday met with world leaders in The Hague, has been grappling with a backlash to U.S. government surveillance programs since classified details about the extent of data-gathering were first leaked by Snowden.

Snowden is currently in Russia under temporary asylum.

Obama has defended use of the data to protect Americans from attacks. His plan seeks to hold onto as many capabilities of the program as possible while ending the government s role in controlling the database, the official said on background.

The president considered those options and in the coming days, after concluding ongoing consultations with Congress, including the Intelligence and Judiciary committees, will put forward a sound approach to ensuring the government no longer collects or holds this data, the official said in a statement.

The Obama administration will renew the NSA s telephone metadata program until Congress passes new authorizing legislation, the official said.

Obama made some decisions about changes to the programs in January,

including a ban on eavesdropping on the leaders of friendly or allied nations.

But he had charged Attorney General Eric Holder and intelligence agencies to make additional proposals for the metadata program by March 28, when it comes up for reauthorization.

The New York Times said the administration will propose that telephone companies keep the data. But companies will not be required to hold onto the data any longer than they normally do, the Times said.

The administration had considered requiring the companies to hold onto data for longer than 18 months. The administration rejected that idea after concluding that newer data is most important for investigations, the Times said.

Two top lawmakers on the House of Representatives intelligence panel were slated on Tuesday to unveil a bipartisan measure on metadata use.

The bill, sponsored by Republican Mike Rogers and Democrat Dutch Ruppersberger, would require the government to serve a directive on telecommunication companies for data, the Washington Post reported, citing congressional aides.

Their bill would not require court approval of the request before it was made, but the court could order the data expunged if it was later found not to be linked to suspicious activity, the Post reported.

The U.S. government began collecting metadata shortly after the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States. A surveillance court allowed the data collection based on a legal provision known as Section 215 of the Patriot Act.

NSA officials and lawmakers such as Senator Dianne Feinstein, the Democratic chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, have defended the bulk metadata program, saying it helps the government connect the dots between terrorist plotters overseas and co-conspirators inside the United States.

But others said it went too far. One U.S. district judge has criticized the program as an arbitrary invasion of privacy.

The Times said the administration's proposal would also include a provision clarifying whether Section 215 of the act could be used in the future to allow bulk phone data collection.

Microsoft Tightens Email Privacy Policy After Taking Fire Over Hotmail Incident

Summary: After revelations that it had inspected a Hotmail customer's email as part of an internal investigation, Microsoft announced new rules last week. This week, following "uncomfortable" criticism of that policy, the company announced new rules: no inspections without a warrant.

Revelations in a Federal criminal complaint that Microsoft accessed the contents of a Hotmail account without a warrant brought a hailstorm of criticism down on the company last week. In response, Microsoft argued it

was well within its rights under the terms of service and that the facts of the case were extraordinary.

But they also promised not to make one of those inspections again without calling in additional legal help.

Sorry, said the privacy and civil liberties community, that's not good enough. The most blistering critique came from the Electronic Frontier Foundation, which called Microsoft's announcement "Warrants for Windows."

Unfortunately, this new policy just doubles down on ... Microsoft's indefensible and tone-deaf actions in the Kibkalo case. It begins with a false premise that courts do not issue orders in these circumstances because Microsoft was searching itself, rather than the contents of its user's email on servers it controlled.

To the contrary, if Microsoft's independent legal team concluded that there was probable cause, it could have passed the tipster's information to the FBI to obtain a warrant and conduct the search under the auspices of the criminal justice system. The warrant protections enshrined in the Constitution would be preserved, ECPA would be satisfied, and Microsoft could have claimed the high moral ground. Instead, Microsoft has opted for an internal corporate shadow court.

This week, in response to the latest wave of criticism, Microsoft General Counsel Brad Smith admitted that the EFF was right and Microsoft was wrong. Here's the new policy, effective immediately:

Effective immediately, if we receive information indicating that someone is using our services to traffic in stolen intellectual or physical property from Microsoft, we will not inspect a customer's private content ourselves. Instead, we will refer the matter to law enforcement if further action is required.

In addition to changing company policy, in the coming months we will incorporate this change in our customer terms of service, so that it's clear to consumers and binding on Microsoft.

Smith acknowledged that the barrage of criticism was "uncomfortable," but also "thought-provoking and even helpful."

Although our terms of service, like those of others in our industry, allowed us to access lawfully the account in this case, the circumstances raised legitimate questions about the privacy interests of our customers.

In part we have thought more about this in the context of other privacy issues that have been so topical during the past year. We've entered a "post-Snowden era" in which people rightly focus on the ways others use their personal information. As a company we've participated actively in the public discussions about the proper balance between the privacy rights of citizens and the powers of government. We've advocated that governments should rely on formal legal processes and the rule of law for surveillance activities.

While our own search was clearly within our legal rights, it seems apparent that we should apply a similar principle and rely on formal legal processes for our own investigations involving people who we suspect are stealing from us. Therefore, rather than inspect the private content of customers ourselves in these instances, we should turn to law enforcement and their legal procedures.

The new policy means Microsoft's hands will be deliberately tied during internal investigations. The company can't go to court and demand a warrant to search its own servers, but the FBI and local law enforcement can inspect the evidence and ask a judge for permission to order Microsoft to produce content from a subscriber's email or cloud file storage. They can also decline to get a warrant and tell Microsoft's investigators to find other ways to get what they need.

For practical purposes, this announcement won't have much effect. Presumably any would-be pirates have learned their lesson and will avoid using Microsoft services to traffic in Microsoft's stolen property.

The change is extremely important, however, in the arena of public perceptions, where Microsoft has been absolutely pummeled over behavior that looked awful even if it was technically permitted. And of course there are the casual accusations of hypocrisy given the company's ongoing "Scroogled" ad campaign, which takes dead aim at Google's policy of scanning its customers' email for the purpose of serving ads.

It's unlikely that any large corporate customers will exit the Microsoft fold over this case. But the company might find it needs to work harder to prove that it deserves the trust of those customers.

The EFF responded almost immediately with praise: "We commend Microsoft for its willingness to reconsider its policies, and we think it made the right decision."

Internet New Encryption System "Mylar" Encrypts Data in Browser Before Reaching Server

An MIT researcher has created a service that keeps data encrypted on servers at all times, only decrypting the data on a person's computer for them to see.

According to MIT Technology Review, MIT researcher Roluca Popa developed the system - called "Mylar" - along with Meteor Development Group. It aims to stop websites from leaking data or allowing hackers to steal data.

Mylar runs code inside a user's browser, which handles most of the processing and displaying of information (in other words, it takes over what a traditional service's servers would do). A server can still perform actions the user needs, but doesn't have a way to decrypt the data, as the user is the only one with a password in their browser. This password encrypts data there before it ever makes its way to the server.

Popa said a service using Mylar could search across encrypted data stored on its servers, enabling a user to search documents they had uploaded to a file storage service. Mylar can also let users share data with other users, because a system distributes the necessary encryption key in a way that protects it from being seen by the server or anyone monitoring activities.

There's even an optional browser extension that can protect against the server stealing the key needed to decrypt a person's data.

Popa used the Web service building tool called Meteor to create her system, which will make it more simple for developer's to use.

A big upside to this system is its ease of use. Popa said a group of patients at Newton-Wellesley hospital in Boston are currently testing Mylar for their medical information, and all the change needed in the hospital's current system was changing 28 lines of code out of 3,659 total.

You don't notice any difference, but your data gets encrypted using your password inside your browser before it goes to the server, said Popa.

If the government asks the company for your data, the server doesn't have the ability to give unencrypted data.

Facebook Looks to Drones, Lasers and Satellites for Internet Access

Two thirds of the world population does not have Internet access. Facebook already has more than a billion users on its service, but before it can sign up the rest of world it needs to get them online.

The social media company announced a new step in its ambitious plan to bring affordable, basic Internet access to "every person in the world." Facebook's new Connectivity Lab will research and test experimental technology including drones, satellites and lasers to spread the reach of the Internet to isolated locations that currently do not have Internet.

"We've been working on ways to beam Internet to people from the sky," said CEO Mark Zuckerberg in a post announcing the new effort.

Last year, Facebook announced Internet.org, a coalition of major tech companies working together to lower barriers to Internet access using more traditional methods, such as making it cheaper to get Internet on cell phones. Those efforts have been responsible for getting 3 million more people online, according to Zuckerberg.

This new initiative focuses on experimenting with new technology. The group is working with drones that can stay in the air for months at a time, bringing Internet connections to suburban areas. In more rural spots, satellites will be tested as a way to beam connections to the people on the ground. The group will attempt to make speedier long distance connections using invisible infrared laser beams.

The developers who keep redesigning your Facebook news feed will not be dabbling in satellites and drones. Facebook has brought on aerospace experts from NASA and the team who built the Zephyr solar-powered drone.

Internet access is a cause major technology companies can easily get behind. It's a smart business investment that doubles as a charitable cause.

Google announced plans to tackle the issue last summer with its own ambitious Project Loon. Instead of drones, the company is testing giant balloons that travel in the earth's stratosphere for 100 days at a time. Using specialized antennas, the balloons will deliver Internet at 3G speeds.

Both companies frame their plans to bring the Internet to the entire world as altruistic, not as a land grab. Microsoft chairman Bill Gates dismissed some of these efforts in an interview with Bloomberg in 2013, saying "when a kid gets diarrhea, no, there's no website that relieves that."

In many of the world's most remote areas, poverty is a more pressing concern than Internet connectivity. People cannot afford electricity or clean water, let alone phones. However, humanitarian organizations have been pushing for more access in these remote areas to improve the efficiency of aid work. For example, it would make it easier to set up remote health care stations in situations where the nearest doctors or hospitals are hours or days away.

In countries where the Internet is already more widespread, unfettered access allows for freedom of speech and expression. So much so that the United Nations declared access to the Internet a basic human right in 2011. Governments can still censor or filter access to control what information is disseminated, as the Turkish government is doing with its recent attempts to block Twitter and YouTube.

For now, the Connectivity Lab is focusing on the technical challenges of delivering the Internet to geographically tricky spots. Eventually, low cost Internet and cell phone use could spread to the populations in these areas and when it does, maybe they'll sign up for Facebook.

Next MacBook Air May Sport 12-Inch Screen and New Trackpad Tech

Apple may launch a brand new MacBook Air version this year, a Weiphone poster has revealed, sporting some exciting features, including a 12-inch screen that would position it between the existing 11.6-inch and the 13.3-inch models. Furthermore, the new MacBook model would have a high-resolution Retina display, would lack a fan, and might feature a new trackpad design that eliminates the mechanical button.

A recently awarded Apple patent revealed that the company has been working on a trackpad design that uses force sensors and actuator feedback and thus doesn't require a physical button, a design that could help Apple further slim down MacBook laptops.

It's not clear when such a product would launch or how much it would cost, but this isn't the first time a 12-inch MacBook Air has been mentioned. KGI Securities analyst Ming-Chi Kuo said last October that Apple would be releasing a slimmer 12-inch MacBook model with Retina display this year. We expect the unprecedented 12-inch model will boast both the portability of the 11-inch model and productivity of the 13-inch model, the analyst said. The high-resolution display will also offer the outstanding visual experience of the Retina MacBook Pro. The offering will likely be lighter and slimmer than the existing MacBook Air to further highlight ease of portability in the cloud computing era.

The analyst has been accurate with previous Apple-related predictions, and MacRumors says the Weiphone poster has provided reliable MacBook-related information in the past.

In addition to revealing details about a 12-inch Retina MacBook Air

model, the same source revealed that the iWatch does exist, but it's only in prototype stage, so an announcement isn't expected anytime soon. Furthermore, new MacBook Pro models are not expected sooner than September.

Microsoft Unveils Word, PowerPoint, and Excel for iPad

Microsoft Office is coming finally! to the iPad.

At a press conference on Thursday morning, Microsoft announced that Word, Excel, and PowerPoint would become available as iPad apps for the first time.

The apps will be available for free if you want to open and view documents, spreadsheets, and presentations. You will need a subscription to Microsoft's Office 365 service if you want to create or edit.

Like Google's Drive service, Microsoft can store and sync documents in the cloud, so that you can access the most up-to-date versions of the files on multiple devices. This means that if, say, you add a funny cat video to a PowerPoint presentation on your laptop, that cat video will show up in the presentation that's on your tablet after you connect the iPad to the Internet.

The arrival of Microsoft Office for iPad had been the subject of much debate in the years leading up to this day. Under former CEO Steve Ballmer, Microsoft had refused to bring Office to Apple's tablet, instead creating a mobile-friendly operating system (Windows 8) and its own line of tablets (the Surface) for business use. This release could be seen as an admission that those efforts came up short: The iPad remains dominant, and competing productivity services like Google Drive and Apple's iWork have become more popular, as business workers increasingly rely on tablets and smartphones over laptops and PCs.

Still on Windows XP? Here's Some Bad Advice

Windows XP is dying. On April 8, Microsoft will stop supporting the ancient operating system that was released in 2001 and at one point was used by 400 million people.

You might think that an operating system that was actually engineered in the late 90s would be fully obsolete and unused by now. After all, since XP came out, Microsoft has released several major replacement versions: Windows Vista, Windows 7, and Windows 8 (recently upgraded to Windows 8.1).

But there's something about Windows XP. It's basic, stable, fast enough, and good enough for a lot of people. It's still running on more than 10 percent of the world's computers, and it's huge in China.

Still, it's time. It's hard to keep an operating system this old up to snuff in today's online environment. XP works, but it's not built to the same security level as modern operating systems. Microsoft doesn't want to keep writing new security upgrades for it, so on April 8, it's

stopping. No more security updates. No more support. Your XP computer will still work, but Microsoft won't help you anymore. Microsoft is pretty harsh about it: XP cannot be considered safe to use after support ends.

Microsoft urges you to upgrade. There's even a site that tells you when your XP world will end: AmIRunningXP.com. Microsoft also has more info on what "end of support" means. To be fair, moving off XP would be a smart thing to do. Newer operating systems are easier to use (at least most of them), they run the cool new apps, and they're definitely safer. But how do you move from an old computer that's running XP into the modern era? I've heard a lot of advice on how to make the transition. Not all of it good. Here are your options. Bad ideas first:

Bad idea #1: Just don't worry about it

It's not like Windows XP computers will magically stop working on April 9. So don't worry about it; just keep on using it.

Why is this a bad idea? The problem with an old operating system is that it's not up to speed with modern attacks. Operating systems need to be patched (updated) frequently to keep them safe from data thieves, scammers, viruses, and the like. After April 8, there will be no more updates coming.

But if you plan to keep going with XP for a while, at least make sure you're on the last, ultimate version of it, called Service Pack 3. After April 8, you won't be able to upgrade. Windows' own update utility should manage this for you. Make sure it's done so.

Microsoft says it will continue to provide updates to its anti-malware signatures and engine for Windows XP users through July 14, 2015, so you can continue to use the company's antivirus app, Microsoft Security Essentials. That is, assuming you already have MSE. After April 8, it won't be available for download at all. You could also get a possibly better antivirus tool from another vendor. PC Pro recommends Avast 2014. It's free, and they say it's better than Microsoft's own Security Essentials.

But don't get comfortable. According to Microsoft, even up-to-date security software can't save you if the operating system itself isn't secure. And Windows XP just isn't. Microsoft says, "Our research shows that the effectiveness of anti-malware solutions on out-of-support operating systems is limited. Running a well-protected solution starts with using modern software and hardware designed to help protect against today's threat landscape."

So you can keep using XP, but not without risk. You probably don't want it connected to the Internet, and even plugging a USB drive into it could be unsafe.

Bad idea #2: Upgrade to Windows 8, like Microsoft wants you to. Why not get the latest version of Windows? It's so shiny!

Windows 8.1's default interface. Get ready to re-learn Windows.

There are two big reasons why this is a bad idea. The first: It probably won't work. Your old Win XP machine likely does not have the horsepower, the hard disk space, or the hardware to run Windows 8.

Second: You'll hate it. Windows 8 (including 8.1) has two separate interfaces. There's a Windows desktop-like one in there, which you'll probably find comfortable, but you have to go through the touchscreen-centric primary interface to get to it. That's fine if you have a tablet. But your XP machine is no tablet.

You can mostly avoid that tile-based, touchscreen interface, but not completely. It pops up from time to time, usually when you're in a hurry and stressed out, and it's frustrating when it happens.

You can also bite the bullet and get a new Windows 8 computer. They're not expensive at all. They're just alien.

If you do start over on a Windows 8 machine, Microsoft has tools to make moving your data from XP to Windows 8 fairly straightforward.

Bad idea #3: Move to Linux

The geek operating system (sorry, geeks) called Linux is stable, fast, cheap, and free, and will run on your old XP machine better than Windows 8 will. The nerds will tell you it'll do everything that XP will do. They're right.

The Ubuntu version of Linux. It'll do everything you want, but you might have to learn a few new concepts.

But here's why it's a bad idea: It really is a platform for nerds. Few people you know unless you know a lot of programmers will be able to help you out. And your Windows software won't work. If you have apps you like, you'll have to find Linux equivalents for them. You're better off moving to a consumer-friendly operating system.

Bad idea #4: Get a Chromebook

We love the oddball new Chromebooks, Google's web-centric laptops. They're cheap, they work great with online apps, and they're easy to share.

Why is this a bad idea, then? Because Chromebooks rely on a connection to the Internet. Some functions and apps work when disconnected, but most don't. And Chromebooks don't run regular Windows programs (Photoshop, Quicken, iTunes, and so on). Chromebooks are great for specific purposes and people (they are great for kids at home or school, for example), but they're not quite ready to replace Macs or Windows PCs for everybody.

Don't like these bad ideas? Then try one of these other directions:

Better idea #1: Upgrade to Windows 7

The version of Windows that predates Windows 8 is really good. It's stable and conceptually similar enough to Windows XP that a transition will not be difficult.

It's not a perfect solution, though. Your machine may not have the juice to run Windows 7, either, as it actually takes a slightly more powerful computer to run Windows 7 well than Windows 8. But you can, for the time being still buy Windows 7 (even though it's not clear if Microsoft is still manufacturing Win 7 disks), and some hardware vendors still sell computers with Windows 7 installed on them.

Microsoft really wants you on Windows 8, obviously. A Microsoft spokesperson took pains to remind me that Windows 8 is more secure, faster, and uses less energy than Windows 7.

But the easiest new version of Windows to learn after Windows XP is Windows 7, so if you're just using Windows to run a particular app, it's a very good option.

Better idea #2: Get a Mac

Bizarrely, it's easier to move from Windows XP to the Macintosh operating system, OS X, than to Windows 8.1. There are maddening small differences, but conceptually OS X is similar enough to Windows XP (and every other version of Windows other than Windows 8). It doesn't take people very long to adapt. Most (though not all) good apps are available in Mac versions, too, and your data files should transfer over just fine.

It's an expensive move, though. The cheapest new Mac costs \$1,000 (the smallest MacBook Air). Desktops start at \$1,300. Windows machines today start in the \$300 range, or nicely equipped at about \$600. If you can afford it, though, and you're not married to specific Windows XP software, Macs are a treat to use.

Why are people still using Windows XP? I asked my Facebook followers and got good answers from people who are. Some people keep old machines for specific purposes, like running XP-only software and the like. Some just take the enlightened opinion that if they have a computer that works for what they want, there's no reason to spend money and time on an upgrade.

Just because a manufacturer deems one of its products obsolete, it doesn't mean everyone who uses such a product has to stop using it immediately. However, over time, an old product in the modern world will develop problems: It will be less safe, or there won't be people to fix it, or some other product it relies on will fail, and replacements won't be available any longer. Yes, I'm talking about Windows XP, but the same is true if you're still driving a 1976 AMC Pacer.

When you get into this part of the cycle, you might be forced to move on. But you have a lot of options when you decide to do so — and they might not be the options that the manufacturer recommends.

IDG Founder Patrick J. McGovern Dies at 76

International Data Group (IDG), publisher of Macworld, TechHive, Greenbot and PCWorld, announced Thursday with great sadness that its Founder and Chairman, Patrick J. McGovern, died March 19, 2014, at Stanford Hospital in Palo Alto, California.

IDG has lost a true visionary, and the IT community has lost one of its most exceptional citizens, said newly elected IDG board chairman, Walter Boyd. Pat's foremost desire was for IDG to make the world a better place through the medium of information technology. He created a unique workplace where we have the outstanding leadership team in place to ensure that the company he created will continue to grow and prosper.

Patrick Joseph McGovern, known as Pat, was born Aug. 11, 1937, in Queens, New York, and spent the majority of his childhood in

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His career in publishing began while he was a student at MIT, when he applied for a part-time editorial job at Computers and Automation the first U.S. computer magazine. After his graduation from MIT in 1959 with a degree in biophysics, he was promptly named Associate Editor and became Associate Publisher.

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In 1964, with the computer industry still in its infancy, McGovern founded International Data Corporation (IDC), now an IDG subsidiary, to provide the industry with timely and reliable statistics on information technology markets. Three years later, McGovern launched Computerworld, a weekly print publication dedicated to keeping computer buyers apprised of industry and product news. Computerworld became IDG's flagship publication, and in 1972, McGovern began exporting the Computerworld concept, launching Shukan Computer in Japan.

Over a span of 50 years, McGovern oversaw IDG's launch of more than 300 magazines and newspapers and championed the expansion of IDG's network to include more than 460 websites, 200 mobile apps and 700 events worldwide. Today, IDG brands are found in 97 countries and include PCWorld, Macworld, TechHive, Greenbot, CIO, CSO, Computerworld, GamePro, IDC, IDG Connect, IDG TechNetwork, IDG World Expo, InfoWorld, and Network World.

In 1980, McGovern established one of the first joint ventures between a U.S. company and one in the People's Republic of China, and in 1992, McGovern established IDG Technology Ventures, one of the first venture capital firms in China. In recognition of his great contribution to China's information industry and venture capital field, McGovern was awarded the International Investment Achievement Award at the CCTV 2007 China Economic Leadership Award ceremony in Beijing. This was the first time the award was given to a foreign investor. The award ceremony was broadcast live nationwide on China Central Television (CCTV). McGovern made 130 trips to China in his lifetime.

On Feb. 28, 2000, MIT created the McGovern Institute for Brain Research, made possible by a total \$350 million gift from McGovern and his wife, Lore Harp McGovern, one of the largest philanthropic gifts in the history of higher education. The McGoverns envisioned an institute whose ultimate goal would be to understand the human brain in health and disease. Nobel laureate and professor of biology at MIT, Phillip A. Sharp, was named founding director, and Robert Desimone succeeded Sharp as director in 2004. In the fall of 2005, the McGovern Institute moved into spacious facilities in MIT's Brain and Cognitive Sciences Complex in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In 2011, plans were announced to strengthen the institute's collaborations with colleagues in China through the establishment of three new IDG-McGovern Institutes at Tsinghua University, Peking University and Beijing Normal University.

Pat and Lore inspired all of us with their passion to understand the brain and help people suffering from brain disorders, said Desimone.

Their gift enabled many new students and faculty to start research careers, and they personally cheered everyone on with each important discovery. With three new IDG-McGovern Institutes in China, Pat realized his dream of an international effort to develop cures for diseases that affect so many people, and he will be greatly missed.

In 2008, McGovern received the Robert L. Krakoff Lifetime Achievement Award from American Business Media. In 2005, McGovern received the Magazine Publishers of America's Lifetime Achievement Award. His other industry awards include the 2004 Lifetime Achievement Award from the

American Society of Business Publications Editors and the Top Innovator in Business Publishing Award from BtoB Media Business magazine.

Additional honors included The James Smithsonian Bicentennial Medal from the Smithsonian Institution, The Entrepreneur of the Year from Ernst & Young and the Entrepreneurial Leadership Award from the MIT Enterprise Forum of Cambridge, Inc. He was a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, a Member of the Corporation at MIT, Board Chair of the McGovern Institute for Brain Research at MIT and Director of the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research.

IDG will remain a privately held company overseen by its current Board of Directors. Walter Boyd, former IDG President, has been elected Chairman of the IDG Board of Directors. Ted Bloom, IDG's current CFO, has been named President and will continue as CFO of IDG. Kirk Campbell, President and CEO of IDC, and Michael Friedenbergl, CEO of IDG Communications Worldwide, will continue to lead their respective organizations.

Pat always believed that each of IDG's business units should run like independently managed companies, and that structure and process will continue, said Bloom. The best way we can all honor Pat is for us to continue being successful with the structure he set up 50 years ago.

McGovern is survived by his wife Lore, his son Patrick McGovern and wife Raquel, his daughter Elizabeth McGovern and husband Scott Early, his stepdaughter Michelle Bethel and husband Erik, and his stepdaughter Dina Jackson and husband Edward, as well as nine grandchildren.

Information about a memorial service will be forthcoming.

Remembrances and condolences can be shared online at www.idg.com or via email at rememberingpatmcgovern@idg.com.

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